

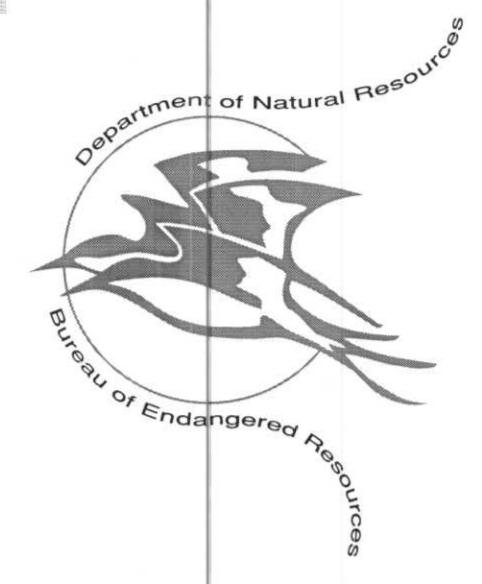
# 1991 Annual Report



Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Endangered Resources



# 1991 Annual Report



# **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**

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Bruce B. Braun, Deputy Secretary

Maryann Sumi, Executive Assistant

James Addis, Administrator, Division of Resource Management

Ronald Nicotera, Director, Bureau of Endangered Resources

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# Working for the Intangibles

The quality of our lives is as dependent on the intangible as it is on the tangible. Things like our income and our jobs matter greatly. But without nature to replenish our spirit, I do not believe our happiness can be complete.

Staff in the Bureau of Endangered Resources join forces with a wide variety of other managers and biologists to preserve and protect the intangibles — the rare places, plants and animals which are not only original parts of our state ecosystem but whose presence brings us joy and knowledge. These integrated efforts include wildlife managers in the Bureau of Wildlife Management who frequently implement our programs in the field, biologists from other DNR programs, The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and many other organizations and individuals.

Our state legislators summed it up best when writing the natural resources laws that govern our work:

"Since these communities represent the only standard against which the effects of change can be measured, their preservation is of highest importance, and the legislature urges all persons and agencies to fully consider all decisions in this light."

We worked hard in 1991 to preserve the diversity of life in Wisconsin by protecting the nongame, threatened and endangered plants and animals that live here, and the lands and waters they need to survive.

We define an endangered species as one whose continued existence here is in jeopardy based on scientific evidence, and a threatened species as one which appears likely, in the foreseeble future, to become endangered. In this annual report you will often find them collectively referred to as critical species. We also manage birds and animals that are not threatened or endangered, but which are also not hunted. They are called nongame species.

Because you share the state's landscape with these species and communities, their successful survival is your success as well.

In 1991, we collected 40 trumpeter swan eggs from Alaska; protected 5,060.75 more acres under our state natural areas program and found new populations of the rare pecatonica mayfly, among other accomplishments.

But while we will continue working for the protection of our state's natural heritage, we can't do our job fully without your support. Quite frankly, it takes more money than we have to do the job right. That's where you come in. By donating to the Wisconsin Endangered Resources Fund directly or on your state income tax form, you become a partner in protection.

The kind of challenges that lie before us are pressing. Undisturbed beaches which piping plovers need for nest sites continue to dwindle. The beautiful Karner blue butterfly is still a rare sight in our state. And we only have about half the number of wolves that could reside in our northern forests. These are just a few examples of the many species and natural communities that will benefit from your donation.

Take a critical look at the following pages. They summarize our 1991 budget and accomplishments, and are our report to you on the state of insects and mammals, plants, clams, prairies and all other types of species and communities that need our help to survive. I believe we also need them just as much.

Ronald F. Nicotera, Director Bureau of Endangered Resources

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# Identifying

By combing places such as meadows, beaches and forests, biologists have found several remnant yet otherwise unknown populations of species native to Wisconsin. Without such identification these vital parts of our state's ecosystem could be lost forever.

# **Natural Heritage Inventory**



Created in 1985, the Natural Heritage Inventory is an ongoing survey of plants, wildlife and natural communities that are rare or declining in number. The NHI's integrated system of computer files and maps lists where these species are found, describes their life histories and lists other sources of information about them in an effort to preserve and protect them.

In 1991, 1,000 records of rare plant, wildlife and natural community locations including 500 bald eagle nest locations plus information about 500 species of mosses, liverworts and hornworts—were added to the NHI database. That brings the total number of such computer records to 4,220.

#### Snails

We contracted Dr. James Theler of UW-LaCrosse to survey cold, rocky slopes in southwestern Wisconsin for three species of rare terrestrial snails. The Hubricht's vertigo snail and the occult vertigo snail are on the state endangered species list, while the Briarton pleistocene snail has not yet been located in the state. All are relics of the Ice Age. Theler's status survey will be completed in 1992 and will help determine if these species should be included on the federal endangered and threatened species list. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided funding for this research.

#### Mussels

Although originally found in 11 states and five major river systems, the winged mapleleaf mussel today is found only below the hydroelectric dam at St. Croix Falls. In 1991, surveys continued to determine the population makeup and distribution of this mussel on the St. Croix River.

#### Mayflies and Dragonflies

As part of a two-year status survey, biologists found two new occurences of the rare Pecatonica River mayfly. Originally, the only place in the world this endangered species was known to occur was on the lower Wisconsin River. It can now be found on the Black River and the Chippewa River too.

Other rare insects studied in 1991 include the flat-headed mayfly and four dragonflies: the elusive clubtail, the pygmy snaketail, the extra-striped snaketail and the St. Croix snaketail. Biologists searched 69 sites on 27 streams for the presence of these endangered mayflies and dragonflies.

We also completed the second year of a twoyear search for the Hine's emerald bog skimmer, a rare aquatic dragonfly. All five populations located were in Door County.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided funding for these studies.

### Frogs and Toads

Area wildlife managers and volunteers conducted frog and toad surveys in 1991. An analysis of those surveys won't be completed until spring, but based on past surveys it appears the American toad population has increased slightly; the leopard frog is holding steady; and the green, wood and chorus frogs are declining.



More than 50 volunteers took part in the 21st annual breeding bird survey which included 83 state natural areas and 42 sites that are being considered for natural area designation. The volunteers sighted 193 bird species of which 39 were either threatened or endangered.

We also continued to monitor great egret, double-crested cormorant and heron reproduction at Four Mile Island Rookery State Natural Area which is located at Horicon Marsh. A complete population survey for great egrets is planned for 1992. In 1991, several volunteers made an attempt to count great egret nest sites. They found 72 nests.

#### Butterflies

A team of biologists and volunteers found 42 Karner blue butterfly populations in central and northwestern Wisconsin, but only a few individuals were counted in each population. To learn more about the habitat requirements of this globally rare species, biologists also examined the areas where the butterflies are found to learn more about their habitat requirements and to develop a successful management strategy. The Karner blue butterfly is native to sandy pine and oak communities that support wild lupine flowers, the butterfly's exclusive food. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided funding for this research.

A prairie native, the regal fritillary butterfly was once found in all but the northern third of the state. Today it's regularly found at only one site—a prairie preserve in southwestern Wisconsin. In 1991, however, volunteers Ann and Scott Swengel checked 11 Wisconsin prairies for the presence of this threatened species. They discovered a few individuals at two new prairie sites, but it is not yet known if these butterflies will continue to use these areas.



#### Plants and Flowers

Two new populations of the rare prairie white-fringed orchid were found in 1991, one in Racine County and one in Jefferson County.

The calypso orchid was found in only three cedar swamps in northeastern Wisconsin. The populations are small but apparently healthy. Searches for the plant just one year ago were unsuccessful.

Biologists located the only known Wisconsin population of the western Jacob's ladder in Florence County.

Volunteers found two new populations of the prairie bush clover in southern Wisconsin.

Although they surveyed six lakes, biologists located only one population of algal-leaved pondweed in Bayfield County. All other searches were unsucessful.

Biologists found prairie thistle at five new sites and looked for rare plants at Wisconsin Dells; the barrens of Marinette County; Governor Dodge State Park; Kohler Dunes State Natural Area; Point Beach State Forest; railroad prairies in Green, Juneau and Rock counties and hill prairies in Dane, Grant and Iowa counties.

Three researchers from the University of Wisconsin and one volunteer made an inventory of plant species found on eight state natural areas.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided funding for many of these studies.



# **Protecting**

Sometimes it's a 1,000 acre forest. Sometimes it's only a small prairie remnant. But no matter the size of the area or the type of critical species found there, biologists are protecting Wisconsin's natural heritage through land acquisitions and dedications, by reviewing how proposed land use will impact endangered resources and with state and federal laws.

# State Natural Areas



Through acquisitions, gifts and designations, more than 60,000 acres of remnant plant and animal communites native to Wisconsin are now protected under the state natural areas system.

State natural areas provide habitat for at least 58 percent of the 208 plants and animals on the state threatened and endangered species list. Specifically, 86 percent of listed birds; 75 percent of listed herptiles; 58 percent of listed insects; 61 percent of listed plants; 36 percent of listed mollusks and 50 percent of listed fish use a state natural area as their home. Here's a list of natural area lands obtained in 1991:



# Acquisitions Moonlight Bay Bedrock Beach, Door County.......106 acres Gifts Designations Big Eau Pleine Woods, Marathon County ......105 acres

#### **Plants**

One of our most significant plant protection accomplishments this year was completing a federal recovery plan for Fassettt's locoweed. We are also encouraging private property owners to protect this plant if it occurs on their land.

We established a plant policy committee to help guide changes in laws that protect rare and native flora. The issues the committee is addressing include aquatic plant harvesting and the propagation and sale of endangered and threatened plant species by nurseries.

In addition, we restricted ginseng harvest practices in the state and worked with the U.S. Forest Service to develop protection guidelines for sensitive plant species.

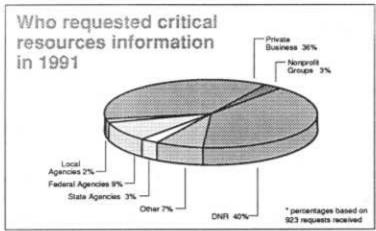
# **Biodiversity Team**

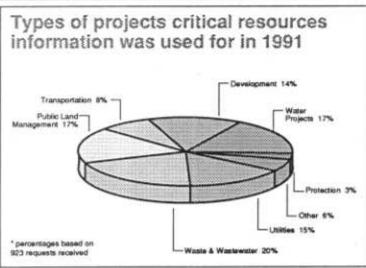
The Biodiversity Team was formed in 1989 to determine how state lands can be managed in a way that protects a wide variety of plants and animals.

In 1991 the team completed its fact-finding mission and wrote biodiversity management strategies for six types of natural communities: wetlands, grasslands, savannas, northern forests, southern forests and aquatic systems. These draft reports will be edited for review by DNR administrators and others.

# **Project review**

We helped land planners and managers protect critical species and natural communities by providing current information on each resource's location, status and habitat requirements. Under state law, many land planners and managers must check for the presence of critical species and communities when planning a land-use project.





In 1991, we received 923 separate requests for such information. That's down from 1,113 in 1990. There were several key reasons for the decrease in the number of requests: we no longer review Farmer's Home Administration property loan projects which comprised 31 percent of our 1990 information requests; another DNR program now reviews all hydroelectric dam relicensing projects; and some DNR staff working in our outlying districts are now trained to access our information without our assistance.

However, although the total number of requests decreased in 1991 the number of requests for some specific types of projects increased significantly. Wastewater and solid and hazardous waste requests rose by 13 percent. Utility requests increased 9 percent. Public land management requests went up 8 percent. Commercial development requests grew by 5 percent. These types of projects tend to affect larger areas and thus require more staff time to review.

In May 1990 we began charging a minimum fee of \$60 for each impact review request. However, the fee is waived for research and educational projects that help Bureau of Endangered Resources programs; for requesters who cannot afford the fee; and for requesters who have a formal agreement with the DNR. Because so many projects fall into these categories the fee only recovers nine percent of our operating costs. Thus we rely heavily on donations to the Endangered Resources Fund to provide this information.

# Managing

Howling with wolves and collecting trumpeter swan eggs in Alaska might sound like exotic adventures. But to biologists working for and with the Bureau of Endangered Resources these kinds of activities — while challenging—are routine. They are just a few of the many hands-on field projects completed in 1991, work that is the bottom line of managing Wisconsin's nongame and critical species.

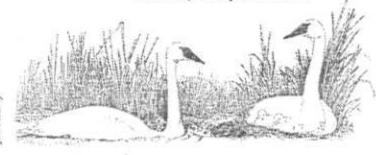
# **Trumpeter Swans**

In order to restore this bird in Wisconsin, biologists sometimes have to do things a little unconventionally. For example, one of the 40 trumpeter swan eggs brought from Alaska to Wisconsin in 1990 began the journey to its new home in the hands of a half-dressed biologist being scrutinized by a moose.

In the case mentioned above, one of our biologists had to partially strip in order to swim through icy water to get to a trumpeter swan nest. He was lucky enough to collect an egg, but upon returning to land was met by an inquisitive moose. In 1991 the Alaska trip wasn't quite as perilous, but our biologists did successfully return with another 40 trumpeter swan eggs. The eggs hatched at the Milwaukee Zoo, then were taken to one of several rearing sites located across the state. The new swans will be released from these sites when they are old enough to establish local breeding territories of their own.

Twenty-two adult swans brought as eggs from Alaska in 1990 were released from rearing sites in 1991.

The largest waterfowl native to North America, trumpeter swans once nested on most Wisconsin wetlands. Their population crashed by the late 1800s, however, because the birds were killed for their feathers and skin which were popular in fashions of the time. Today there are only two active trumpeter swan nests in Wisconsin. Our recovery goal is at least 20 breeding pair by 2000.



# **Peregrine Falcons**

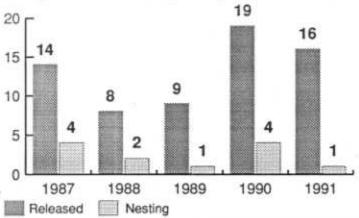
For several years biologists have been releasing peregrine falcons at sites around the state unish the hope that these endangered birds will once again nest and raise affipring in Wisconsin. Continued support from contributors like you will help us reach our goal of 10 breeding pair by 2000.

Because these fast-flying raptors are making part of their comeback in urban areas they are attracting much public support and attention. In 1991, biologists released 15 peregrine falcon chicks from the roof of the LaCrosse city hall with the hope that they will eventually nest somewhere in the area. The release was successful, although two chicks died after flying into a building, one died due to disease and one was euthanized because it lost part of its beak. A fifth chick injured its wing but will be released again.

A pair of peregrine falcons that nested atop the First Wisconsin Center in Milwaukee in 1990 returned in 1991. The returning male died of avian tubercolosis in March, but was quickly replaced by a younger male. The returning female produced four eggs, but only one hatched. Biologists added a captive-raised chick to the nest. By summer both chicks successfully left the nest.

The peregrine falcon is listed as endangered both nationally and in Wisconsin. Our goal is to have 10 breeding pair by 2000.

#### Peregrine Falcons Beginning Their Comeback



# **Bald Eagles**



Once an endangered species in Wisconsin, the bald eagle population today has exceeded our goal of 360 breeding pair. If this population remains stable, bald eagles could be taken off the threatened list within the next few years.

In 1991, aerial surveys conducted by biologists found 414 active bald eagle territories which are sites where there was some attempt at breeding. Our biologists also joined forces with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the University of Michigan, The Raptor Center in Minneapolis and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to track pollutants near 32 eagle nests that are located along waterways with fish consumption advisories.

In addition, biologists began a research project with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to learn more about eagle roosting habitats. Sites to be studied are along the Mississippi River between LaCrosse and Dubuque.

#### Other Birds

### Ospreys



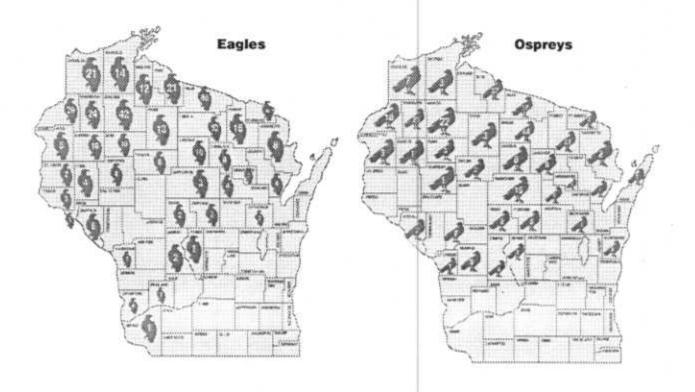
Ospreys reached our recovery goal of 300 active territories in 1989, enabling us to upgrade their status from endangered to threatened. Through aerial surveys in 1991 biologists found 340 active territories. Of that present breeding population two-thirds nest on artificial platforms which we continue to install. Ospreys could be removed from the threatened species list if their population remains stable.

#### Prairie Chickens

Prairie chicken populations are checked each year through annual booming ground censuses in which biologists and volunteers watch from blinds as the birds perform their spring courtship dance. A total 626 cocks were seen during this year's count. The birds are listed as threatened in Wisconsin.

Active territories are sites where hirds have made some assempt at breading. As indicated on these maps, there were 414 active eagle territories and 340 active osprey territories in 1991. The more successful breeding is, the sooner bald eagles and aspreys can be removed from the threatened species list. Continued support from contributors like you will help these birds become a secure part of Wisconsin's natural heritage.

# **Eagles and Ospreys Active in Many Counties**



#### \* Terns

The common and Forster's terns were placed on the state endangered species list in 1979; the Caspian tern has been listed since 1989.

In 1991 there were only 448 breeding pair of common terns at sites on Lake Superior, Green Bay, Lake Winnebago and Lake Butte des Morts. That's a 13 percent increase over 1990. On Kidney Island in southern Green Bay, DNR wildlife staff cleared vegetation to open up more tern nesting areas.

While the number of Forster's tern breeding pairs increased 12 percent from 996 in 1990 to 1,117 in 1991, the news for this species is not all good. The number of Forster's tern colonies decreased by two. Breeding pairs are more successful at producing offspring in a colony because the colony offers protection. A total 112 nesting platforms were installed for these birds in 1991: 99 on Lake Poygan and 13 on Lake Puckaway.

Only six pairs of Caspian terns nested in 1991. They were found near the Milwaukee Harbor.



### Piping Plovers

This endangered shorebird has not nested in Wisconsin since 1989 according to field surveys conducted by biologists in 1990 and 1991. There are very few undisturbed beaches left for these birds to nest on.

#### Loggerhead Shrikes

In 1991, this endangered bird was found nesting at only three of all sites checked by various DNR field staff. Four young hatched at a nest in St. Croix County, five in Pierce County and six in Oconto County. In addition, two adults—which may or may not have been a breeding pair—were seen at a fourth site in western St. Croix County.

#### Barn Owls

Although biologists closely watched the 100 nesting boxes distributed statewide several years ago, in 1991 they found no evidence that this endangered bird nested in Wisconsin.

#### Hawks

Habitat loss continues to threaten the recovery of the red-shouldered hawk. In 1991, one of our many volunteers found only 39 active territories out of 79 sites checked in northeastern Wisconsin. Of those 39 active territories, 22 included nests that produced a total of 51 young. In north central Wisconsin, 28 sites were surveyed and 17 active territories were found. Only eight of those 17 successfully produced offspring.

The Cooper's hawk, taken off the state threatened species list in 1989, continued successfully breeding in 1991. Two of our volunteers located 40 nests of which 35 produced chicks. These volunteers banded 130 young at 34 nest sites as part of their continuing study.

#### Red-necked Grebes

Volunteers located 62 adults and 18 chicks.

#### Timber Wolves



Disease, habitat availability and human attitudes are all factors that influence the number of wolves and welf packs in Wisconsin. Continued support from contributors like you will help us reach our goal of 80 wolves by 1998.

Our wolf biologist and a network of other biologists and volunteers howled to wolves 289 times in 1991. Wolves howled back 19 times, enabling us to determine that five out of the 12 wolf packs in the state produced pups in 1991.

Our biologist and others involved in the wolf project also walked a total 2,595 miles during the winter of 1991 searching for wolf tracks. During the spring and summer, 11 wolves were trapped and outfitted with radio collars to help us keep track of their

movements.

Wisconsin is now home to about 40 wolves in 12 packs. Our recovery goal is 80 wolves by 1998. The wolf is listed on both the state and federal endangered species lists.



# State Natural Areas

Work crews comprised of DNR staff, volunteers, student interns, members of the Youth Conservation Corps and members of the Wisconsin Conservation Corps did much in 1991 to manage for endangered resources. They removed unwanted vegetation at 50 state natural areas, removed

buildings at two and conducted prescribed burns at 26. The crews also erected signs and built fences and boardwalks. They are completing a major trail at the Ferry Bluff State Natural Area in Sauk County and a cordwalk at Kohler Dunes State Natural Area in Sheboygan County.

# Native Plant Seed Farms

Although several years in the planning, in 1991 we established three native plant seed farms with help from the Department of Transportation and the Department of Corrections.

At the farms we will grow plants native to Wisconsin whose seeds will be used to restore native plant communities on stateowned land. We will be planting 120-160 acres of seed-producing plant beds and fields in 1992.

# Reaching Out

By helping people to help the species they share the Earth with, we foster a sense of stewardship. We can't manage, protect and identify all of the state's critical and nongame species by ourselves. That's why we reach out to the public through events like Eagle Awareness Week and through publications like our newletter, *The Niche*.

# **Landowner Cooperation**

When we began congratulating private landowners for the endangered and threatened plant species growing on their property, they pledged to keep maintaining their 
land in a way that supports these species.

That's exactly the kind of response we 
hoped the landowner cooperation program 
would produce.

Right now it's just a pilot project focusing on two species: dwarf lake iris and Pitcher's dune thistle, both of which are listed as threatened at the state and federal levels. But in the future we hope to expand this program statewide and include railroad and roadside right-of-way landowners in addition to traditional private landowners.



# Adoption

To protect Wisconsin's growing bald eagle population and to help find homes for stray reptiles we have two successful programs that foster public participation in our work: Reptile Adoption and Adopt an Eagle Nest. natural world. By living at a nature center they will be well cared for and help many people understand the role they play in our state's ecosystem.

#### · Reptiles

In 1991, we found homes for one Blanding's turtle and eight ornate box turtles at nature centers throughout the state. If released into the wild the fate of these turtles—most of which were being illegally kept by pet stores and/or private individuals—would have been dubious at best. We simply did not know what experience, if any, they had surviving in the

#### Eagle Nests

The Adopt an Eagle Nest fund-raising program netted more than \$25,000 from 250 sponsors in 1991. By paying \$100, an individual, classroom, conservation club or any other kind of group can adopt an eagle nest. The money is used to contact private landowners and encourage them to protect nest sites on their property, for aerial surveys of eagle nest locations and for public education.

# **Eagle Awareness Week**

To help promote Eagle Awareness Week (Jan. 13-19) we sponsored two eagle watching days in mid-January. Held in the villages of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac along the Wisconsin River, this annual event is co-sponsored by the Sauk Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce and the Ferry Bluff

Eagle Council. Thousands of people showed up to see the eagles that spend the winter along the open water at the Prairie du Sac dam and down river in Sauk City. Our biologists plus several volunteers were on hand to answer questions about this magnificent bird.

# **Public programs**

Whether the audience was school children or adult science professionals, our biologists gave many in-person presentations about our protection efforts. Some of the groups we met with in 1991 included plant nursery owners and employees; the Society of American Foresters; and school and community groups that wanted to learn about wolves.

We also hosted a public viewing of trumpeter swans being raised at a pond near Pewaukee that's owned by General Electric Medical Systems Facility. We co-sponsored the Dragonfly Society of America's annual conference in Grantsburg which thirty-six people from fifteen states attended.

We held training sessions for both DNR staff and members of the Public Service Commission to teach them about our Natural Heritage Inventory which catalogues rare species and natural communities.



### The Niche



This newsletter is sent out to 4,000 readers to inform them of how we are protecing the state's natural areas and nongame, threatened and endangered species.

In 1991, we published a special issue of the The Niche devoted to bats, an often misunderstood animal but one that is very important in keeping insect populations in check. The issue featured descriptions of Wisconsin bats and instructions for building backyard bat houses.

### **Run Wild**

More than 300 adults and 100 children raced on behalf of critical species and natural areas in the Run Wild fund raiser at Potowatomi State Park in Door County. Now in its fourth year, Run Wild earned \$400 for the Bureau of Endangered Resources in 1991. Major sponsors of this popular event included Employers Health Insurance Company, McDonalds of Sturgeon Bay and Green Bay and WDOR radio station in Sturgeon Bay.



# Investing in the Future

Since 1983, state law has mandated that the Bureau of Endangered Resources preserve the diversity of life in Wisconsin by identifying, protecting and managing the natural communities and endangered and threatened species that are part of the state ecosystem.

Our financial progress towards that goal is reflected in our capital allocations summary. Based on our mandate, our capital allocations are directed to four bureau programs:

# Natural Heritage Inventory Section

Provides an integrated system of computer files, paper files and maps that list critical information about natural areas and endangered and threatened species.

Examples of future and continuing responsibilities facing this section include surveys for endangered resources along the Lower Wisconsin River; a statewide mussel survey; and rare plant and animal inventories.

To meet these and other responsibilities an additional \$347,000 is needed annually outside of the program's base funding.

# Nongame, Endangered and Threatened Species Section

Establishes management and recovery programs necessary to preserve both individual species and the natural communities they live in.

Examples of future and continuing responsibilities facing this section include expanded trumpeter swan reintroduction; revision of wild plant laws; surveys of osprey, Forster's tern and great egret populations; and a butterfly conservation program.

To meet these and other responsibilities an additional \$736,400 is needed annually outside of the program's base funding.

# **Natural Areas Section**

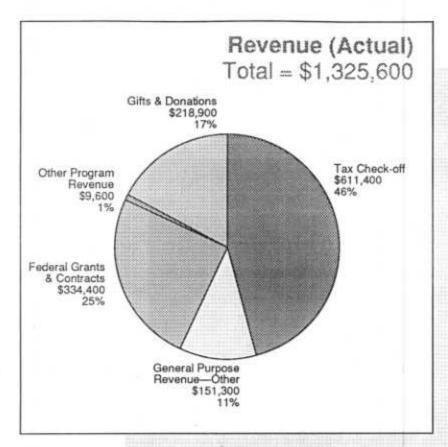
Protects entire plant and animal communities native to Wisconsin through land acquisitions, gifts and designations.

Examples of future and continuing responsibilities facing this section include land acquisitions and easements, plus managing and protecting existing natural areas.

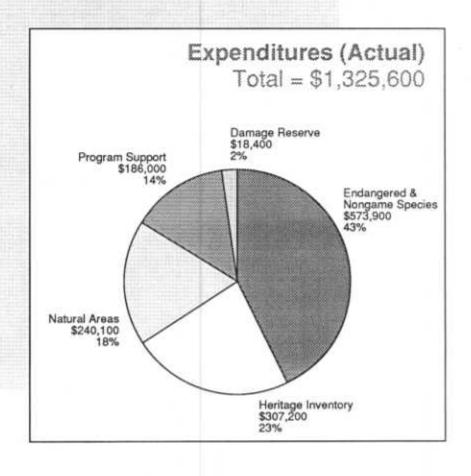
To meet these and other responsibilities an additional \$144,000 is needed annually outside of the program's base funding.

# **Administrative Services**

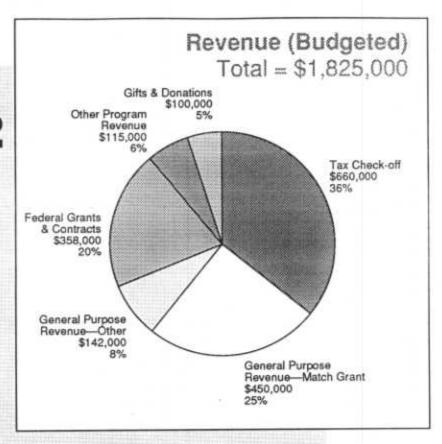
provides support services for each of the other three programs.

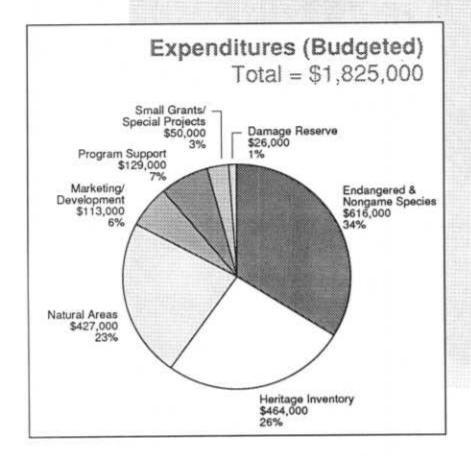


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# With Special Thanks

As you can see from reading the preceding pages, we have accomplished much in 1991 for natural areas and endangered, threatened and nongame species. That's because you continue to give us the money, land and countless hours of volunteer time that help us do our job.

As thanks we won't offer you a fancy plaque. We think your investment should be spent on plants, animals, birds, fish, insects, herptiles, mollusks and the natural areas these species need to survive. But we do want to acknowledge your support. Here, then, is a list of our 1991 contributors.

#### 1991 Contributors

First Wisconsin Development Corporation

Society of Tympanuchus Cupido Pinnatus

American Health and Safety Company

Audubon Council

GE Medical

Zoological Society of Milwaukee

Natural Resources Foundation

The Nature Conservancy

Safari Club International

Timber Wolf Alliance

NorthWord Press, Inc.

Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute

Employers Health Insurance Company

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And all the many other individuals and organizations too numerous to mention

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